VISIT…

NEXT

BESIEGED

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GREAT SIEGES

FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE PRESENT

Paul K. Davis

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BESIEGED

An Encyclopedia of Great Sieges From Ancient Times to the Present

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PAUL K. DAVIS

Santa Barbara, California
Denver, Colorado
Oxford, England

For Jerri and my parents, whose love and support have sustained me for an awfully long time

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100 GREAT SIEGES (Listed Alphabetically)

Acre (1189–91)
Alamo (1836)
Alesia (52 BC)
Antwerp (1584–85)
Aquileia (452)
Arcot (1751)
Athens (Acropolis) (1825)

Badajoz (1812)
Baghdad (1258)
Basra (1982–87)
Beirut (1982)
Bilbao (1937)
Boston (1775–76)
Boulogne (1544)
Calais (1346–47)
Cartagena (1815)
Carthage (149–146 BC)
Chitor Garh (1567–68)
Chitral (1895)
Constantinople (717–18)
Constantinople (1453)
Cuautla (1812)
Delhi (1857)
Dien Bien Phu (1953–54)
Famagusta (1571)

Fort Fisher (1864–65)
Fort Niagara (1759)
Fort Stanwix (1777)
Gaeta (1860–61)
Genoa (1800)
Gibraltar (1779–83)
Granada (1491)
Grozny (1994–95)
Havana (1762)
Hsiang-yang (1268–73)
Humaita (1866–68)
Imphal (1944)
Jericho (1405 BC)
Jerusalem (1099)
Jerusalem (70)
Khartoum (1884–85)
Khe Sanh (1968)
Kinsale (1601–02)

Kut-al-Amara (1915–16)
La Rochelle (1627–28)
Leningrad (1941–44)
Liege (1914)
Lille (1708)
Londonderry (1689)
Louisbourg (1745)
Maastricht (1673)
Madrid (1936–39)
Mafeking (1899–1900)
Magdeburg (1631)
Malta (1565)
Malta (1940–42)
Manila (1898)
Masada (73–74)
Monte Cassino (1944)
Montsegur (1243–44)
Nicopolis (1396)

Numantia (134–133 BC)
Orleans (1428–29)
Osaka (1614–15)
Paris (885–86)
Paris (1870–71)
Pavia (773–74)
Pavia (1524–25)
Peking (1900)
Pensacola (1781)
Petersburg (1864–65)
Plataea (429–427 BC)
Plevna (1877)
Port Arthur (1904–05)
Puebla (1863)
Quebec (1759)
Quebec (1775–76)
Quemoy (Kinmen) (1958–59)

Rhodes (1522)
Rome (1849)
Rome (537–38)
St. Augustine (1702)
Sarajevo (1991–95)
Sevastopol (1854–55)
Sevastopol (1941–42)
Singapore (1942)
Stalingrad (1942–43)
Syracuse (415–413 BC)
Syracuse (213–212 BC)
Tenochtitlan (1521)
Tobruk (1941)
Toulon (1793)
Troy (1250 BC)
Turin (1706)
Tyre (332 BC),
Veii (404–396 BC)

Vicksburg (1863)
Vienna (1529)
Vienna (1683)
Yorktown (1781)

PREV NEXT

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PREFACE

siege *n.*:

1. The surrounding of a town or fortified place in an effort to seize it.
2. A steady attempt to

win
something.

Civilization began with the creation of cities, the congregation of people for mutual support. By their very decision to assemble and collect resources, cities became targets for raiding populations that found taking someone else's possessions easier than producing their own. The need for defense meant that the towns soon built walls around their perimeters to keep the raiders at bay. The desire to overcome those defenses to acquire what was inside resulted in siege warfare.

As the above definition states, a siege is not necessarily a complete

encirclement of a target; indeed, many if not most sieges are of positions not completely cut off from outside contact. Thus, protracted warfare with steady pressure on a target position or city falls under the definition. Because the nature of dealing with fortifications is so different from dealing with an opposing army in the field, siege warfare has been both a proving ground and a source of inspiration for engineers throughout history. Building defenses and overcoming those seemingly impregnable has been a major segment of warfare since earliest times and has no less importance today.

This work discusses both types of siege throughout history, from the first

recorded siege in 1405/1406 B.C. to the most recent in 1996. We have attempted to include topics from across the span of time, as well as from as many places around the world as possible. Thus, many sieges covered here will be completely unknown to most readers, but with effects nonetheless for local and area populations. As it seems most of the world's wars have been ethnic, religious, and political struggles in and around Europe, sieges from this region necessarily dominate. Every effort has been made to keep this focus from being exclusive.

I would like to thank the historians who have contributed to this work: Tom Davis, freelance historian, Brandy

Durham of St. Mary's University, Major Michael A. McClain, USA (Ret.), and Allen Lee Hamilton of St. Philip's College, all in San Antonio.

PREV NEXT

JERICHO

Date:

1405/1406(?) B.C.

Location:

just west of the Jordan River in modern eastern Israel.

Forces Engaged:

Hebrew: unknown.
Commander: Joshua.
Canaanite: unknown.
Commander: unknown.

Importance:

The Hebrew destruction of Jericho cleared the first major hurdle for settlement in the Promised Land.

Historical Setting

Like the siege of Troy, the siege of Jericho is the subject of much speculation over the recorded source (which was written after a significant amount of time had elapsed) and the

archaeological evidence. Although the details of the biblical account of the fall of Jericho are much sketchier than the extended story of Troy told by Homer, modern evidence unearthed at Tel es-Sultan (the modern site of ancient Jericho) gives a greater substantiation to the Hebrew-Canaanite battle.

According to the Holy Bible, the Hebrews left Egypt in a massive exodus, probably around 1446/1445 B.C. (The exodus, too, is a matter of great debate, but not precisely relevant to the events at Jericho.) After a forty-year tour of the Arabian desert to weed out those deemed unfit for entrance into Canaan (the Hebrews' Holy Land), the people of the twelve tribes of Israel approached

their target. Their first battle was with the Amorite kings Sihon and Og, whose forces they obliterated. That victory gave them clear access to the Jordan River north of the Dead Sea for their cross- ing. They easily crossed the Jordan owing to an earthquake that blocked the riverbed upstream. (Similar blockages have been recorded in later accounts, as in 1267 during Sultan Baybars' campaign against the crusaders and in 1927 when archaeologist John Garstang was excavating in the region.) The timing of the earthquake certainly must have had a positive psychological effect on the invading Hebrews.

With his people across the river, the Hebrew leader Joshua sent spies into

Jericho. As it is no more than 5 miles from the river, it seems highly unlikely that the town's inhabitants were unaware of the Hebrew presence, yet they did nothing to oppose the river crossing. The two spies found themselves in the company of Rahab, whose dwelling was on the city walls. Jericho is thus far the oldest walled city located by modern archaeology, and investigations have shown that houses were built in such a way that the city wall was the back wall of the dwelling. Rahab has always had the epithet "the Harlot" attached to her name, and it is indeed possible that she was engaged in the world's oldest profession although some scholars find the original Hebrew language suggests

innkeeper. Certainly an inn would be a logical place to go to catch up on the local news and gossip. Here they learned from Rahab that Jericho's population was terrified of the approaching Hebrews: "your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed" (Joshua 2:9b–10). When the king of Jericho learned that two probable spies were staying at Rahab's, he sent soldiers to capture them. Rahab

hid the Hebrews, then aided in their escape. For this she was promised safety during the upcoming battle.

The Siege

Jericho around 1400 B.C. was already a well-established town built around the spring of Ain es-Sultan. It was in the Plain of Jericho, a lush agricultural area in the midst of surrounding